

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY BERLIN
USMISSION BERLIN
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
USMISSION USNATO
AMEMBASSY WARSAW

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUCHAREST 0608

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, UR, RO
SUBJECT: CEAUSESCU ON HISTORY: STIRRING THE BESSARABIAN POT?

1. SUMMARY. ASKED ABOUT MOTIVES FOR CEAUSESCU'S JAN 24 ATTACK ON THESIS THAT ROMANIA WAS IMPERIALIST STATE AT TURN OF CENTURY, TWO ROMANIAN HISTORIANS (LIKE CEAUSESCU) IDENTIFIED IT AS SOVIET THESIS NO LONGER HELD BY ROMANIANS, BUT DIFFERED ON RELEVANCE TO POLEMICS CONCERNING BESSARABIA. MORE SENIOR MAN DENIED IT HAD ANY; JUNIOR COLLEAGUE, HOWEVER, NOTED THESIS HAD BEEN USED TO DENY LEGITIMACY OF REUNION OF BESSARABIA TO ROMANIA IN 1918 AND SUPPORT LEGITIMACY OF SOVIET ANNEXATION IN 1940, AND OPINED THAT CEAUSESCU HAD ATTACKED IT BECAUSE 1978 WILL BE SIXTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF REUNION AND SOVIETS CAN BE EXPECTED TO GIVE IT HISTORICAL TREATMENT. BOTH DENIED ANY RECENT RE-
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VIVAL OF POLEMICS ON EITHER SIDE, SOMEWHAT DISINGENUOUSLY GIVEN TOUGH ARTICLE ON 1918 BY MIRCEA MUSAT IN SIXTH 1977 ISSUE OF PARTY HISTORY JOURNAL ANALE DE ISTORIE. CEAUSESCU ATTACK THUS PERHAPS BEST READ AS ATTEMPT TO ESTABLISH THEORETICAL BASIS FOR WARDING OFF EXPECTED SOVIET COUNTERATTACKS. END SUMMARY.

2. IN JANUARY 24 ACCEPTANCE SPEECH AT CEREMONY CONFERRING DOCTORATES IN POLITICAL SCIENCE AND ECONOMICS ON HIM, CEAUSESCU SPENT SOME TIME SLAPPING THESIS THAT TURN-OFF-CENTURY ROMANIA WAS AN IMPERIALIST STATE. THESIS WAS EXAMPLE OF CONCEPTION WHICH CREPT INTO SCHOOL BOOKS WHEN HE WAS STUDYING, HE SAID, "DUE TO DOGMATIC, UNCRITICAL POSITION IN ANALYZING REALITIES IN ROMANIA." IT HAD ALSO BEEN REGISTERED IN PARTY DECISION AT PREWAR CONGRESS OR CONFERENCE, "IN CONDITIONS OF ILLEGALITY, IT IS TRUE," BECAUSE MEN HAD NOT HAD CHANCE TO STUDY AND LEARN REALITIES, "OR PERHAPS ALSO INFLUENCED BY FACTORS FROM OUTSIDE." PARTY HAD SINCE CORRECTED ITSELF, AS IT HAD ALSO RE CERTAIN THESES CONCERNING NATIONAL PROBLEM, BUT UNLIKE OTHER THESES, "CORRECT FOR THEIR TIME," THIS ONE HAD NEVER BEEN CORRECT.

3. AT JANUARY 26 LUNCHEON FOR VISITING AMERICAN HISTORY PROFESSOR SOLBERG, DCM ASKED TWO ROMANIAN HISTORIANS SEPARATELY WHY CEAUSESCU HAD CHOSEN TO RAISE POINT AT THIS TIME, AND GOT SOMEWHAT SEPARATE ANSWERS.

4. IORGA HISTORY INSTITUTE DEPUTY DAN BERINDEI SUGGESTED FIRST THAT CEAUSESCU HAD FELT OBLIGED TO SAY SOMETHING ACADEMIC ON ACADEMIC OCCASION, BUT THEN NOTED THESIS HAD HAD POWERFUL SUPPORT, MAINLY ABROAD BUT ALSO AMONG ROMANIAN HISTORIANS. IT HAS NOW DISAPPEARED AMONG LATTER, HE SAID. ASKED ABOUT LIVEANU (MOST RENOWNED ELABORATOR OF SOVIET-STYLE VIEWPOINTS AMONG ROMANIAN HISTORIANS, CONFIDENTIAL

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NOW VERY ILL), BERINDEI SAID WITH SMILE THAT EVEN LIVEANU HAD NOT HELD THIS THESIS "FOR A LONG TIME NOW." ROMANIAN HISTORIANS NOW ARGUE ABOUT HOW MODERN ROMANIAN CAPITALISM WAS AT TURN OF CENTURY AND IN INTERWAR PERIOD, AND HOW MANY "FEUDAL" CHARACTERISTICS IT HAD RETAINED, BUT "IMPERIALISM" BY LENINIST DEFINITION WAS A HIGHER STAGE OF CAPITALISM, AND THERE IS NOT NO QUESTION FOR ROMANIANS THAT ROMANIA HAD NOT ACHIEVED IT BY WORLD WAR II. ASKED WHAT CONNECTION CEAUSESCU'S ATTACK MIGHT HAVE WITH BESSARABIA, BERINDEI SAID THERE WAS NON: POINT HAD BEEN ONE OF GENERAL THEORY.

5. BERINDEI'S MORE JUNIOR IORGA INSTITUTE COLLEAGUE ION OPREA DISAGREED. CO-AUTHOR OF A BOOK ON 1917-1918 (WHEN ROMANIA ACQUIRED BESSARABIA) WHICH HE DESCRIBED, LIKE ALL ROMANIAN HISTORIANS ON THEIR OWN WORK, AS "FACTS, NOTHING BUT FACTS," OPREA SAID THESIS THAT ROMANIA WAS IMPERIALIST STATE IS SOVIET THESIS WHICH HAD BEEN USED TO DENY LEGITIMACY OF BESSARABIAN REUNION IN 1918 AND SUPPORT LEGITIMACY OF SOVIET ANNEXATION IN 1940. ASKED WHY CEAUSESCU HAD RAISED MATTER NOW, OPREA SAID HE THOUGHT IT WAS BECAUSE 1978 WILL BE SIXTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF REUNION AND SOVIETS ARE PROBABLY PLANNING TO GIVE IT SOME HISTORICAL TREATMENT.

6. BOTH MEN DENIED THERE HAD BEEN ANY RECENT REVIVAL OF HISTORICAL POLEMICS ON BESSARABIA, ON EITHER SIDE. DENIAL IS SOMEWHAT DISINGENUOUS, GIVEN MIRCEA MUSAT ARTICLE ON 1918 IN SIXTH 1977 ISSUE OF PARTY HISTORY JOURNAL ANALE DE ISTORIE, WHICH TAKES TOUGH LINE ON BOTH 1812 (ORIGINAL RUSSIAN ANNEXATION) AND 1918. ASKED WHETHER ABSENCE OF RECENT POLEMIC DID NOT GIVE CEAUSESCU'S ATTACK "PREEMPTIVE" CHARACTER, OPREA REPLIED IT DID. HOWEVER, WE WOULD READ THIS AS PREEMPTION OF THEORETICAL HIGH GROUND FOR WARDING OFF EXPECTED SOVIET COUNTER-ATTACK ON OCCASION OF ANNIVERSARY IN MARCH.

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